

NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
NEWS ANALYSIS 1-1236
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AUGUST 10, 1976

SOVIET NUCLEAR TESTS

ANNCR:

TWO RECENT SOVIET UNDERGROUND NUCLEAR TESTS WERE OF SUCH DIMENSIONS THAT THEY RAISED SERIOUS QUESTIONS IN AMERICAN OFFICIAL CIRCLES OVER THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE SOVIET UNION ACTED AGAINST THE SPIRIT OF THE NEW TREATY BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS ON UNDERGROUND TESTS. VOA NEWS ANALYST JOHN ALBERT HAS THESE OBSERVATIONS:

VOICE:

AS WAS THE CASE IN EARLIER REPORTS ON THE SOVIET DEVELOPMENT OF MULTIPLE WARHEADS FOR ITS INTERMEDIATE-RANGE MISSILE SS-20, AS OF YET, AT LEAST, NO ONE IN WASHINGTON ACCUSES THE SOVIET UNION OF HAVING VIOLATED EXISTING AGREEMENTS. IN THE CASE OF THE SS-20, SUCH A MISSILE DOES NOT FALL UNDER THE SALT AGREEMENT ON OFFENSIVE STRATEGIC MISSILES. AND IN THE CASE OF THE RECENT SOVIET UNDERGROUND TESTS, THE NEW TREATY HAS NOT YET BEEN RATIFIED BY EITHER COUNTRIES, THOUGH IT HAS BEEN SENT TO THE U.S. SENATE FOR ITS ADVICE AND CONSENT.

THE FIRST UNDERGROUND SOVIET BLAST -- ON JULY FOURTH -- WAS, ACCORDING TO AVAILABLE DATA, SOMEWHERE IN THE RANGE BETWEEN 100 AND 200 KILOTONS. A SECOND BLAST, RECORDED ON JULY 29TH, COULD HAVE BEEN AT A HIGHER RANGE. UNDER THE TREATY, THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION AGREED NOT TO DETONATE A NUCLEAR WEAPON DEVICE UNDERGROUND OF MORE THAN 150 KILOTONS -- THE EQUIVALENT OF 150,000 TONS OF TNT. AN ACCOMPANYING ACCORD ON NUCLEAR EXPLOSIONS FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES ALSO WOULD BAR ANY SINGLE BLAST OF MORE THAN 150 KILOTONS. STRICTLY SPEAKING, AS NEITHER COUNTRY HAS AS YET RATIFIED THE TREATY, THE SOVIET UNION IS WITHIN ITS

RIGHTS TO DETONATE A NUCLEAR DEVICE OF AN EXPLOSIVE POWER EXCEEDING 150 KILOTONS.

AMERICAN SPECIALISTS, STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMEN EMPHASIZE, ARE NOT CERTAIN WHETHER EITHER OF THE SOVIET EXPLOSIONS EXCEEDED THE TREATY LIMIT. BUT IF THEY DID, THEY REGARD SUCH AN ACTION EVEN BEFORE TREATY RATIFICATION AS VIOLATING THE SPIRIT IN WHICH THE TREATY WAS CONCLUDED. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT SUCH AN ACTION IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE ATTEMPTS OF BOTH GOVERNMENTS, IN MANY MONTHS OF PAINSTAKING NEGOTIATIONS, FINALLY TO EXTEND THE EXISTING NUCLEAR TESTS BAN TO INCLUDE UNDERGROUND TESTS BEYOND A CERTAIN THRESHOLD. THE SPIRIT GUIDING THESE NEGOTIATIONS WAS, OF COURSE, THE DESIRE TO RESTRICT THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEWER AND EVEN MORE POWERFUL NUCLEAR WEAPONS WHILE, AT THE SAME TIME, NOT INTERFERING WITH THE LEGITIMATE DEVELOPMENT OF NUCLEAR POWER FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES.

IT HAS BEEN NOTED IN WASHINGTON THAT SOVIET SPOKESMEN AND SOVIET PUBLICATIONS HAVE RECENTLY MADE THE REPEATED CHARGE THAT IT IS THE UNITED STATES WHICH IS RESPONSIBLE FOR DELAYS IN ARRIVING AT NEW AGREEMENTS ON THE LIMITATION OF STRATEGIC WEAPONS. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE UNINTERRUPTED BUILDUP IN SOVIET STRATEGIC WEAPONS AND THE DEVELOPMENT AND DEPLOYMENT OF EVER MORE POWERFUL MISSILES HAS GREATLY IMPEDED PROGRESS IN THE SALT NEGOTIATIONS AND HAS INTENSIFIED AMERICAN CONCERN OVER THE OVERALL TREND OF SOVIET STRATEGIC POLICY. FOR ITS PART, THE SOVIET UNION HAS DENIED ANY TREATY VIOLATIONS. HOWEVER, FOR THE UNITED STATES, IT IS NOT A QUESTION SO MUCH OF TREATY VIOLATIONS BUT A QUESTION OF THE SPIRIT AND THE GOOD FAITH WITH WHICH THE DIFFICULT NEGOTIATIONS CAN BE APPROACHED.

JS/CAK

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